

Swann, Pam

From: bill_best@heirlooms.org
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2006 9:47 PM
To: DocketClerk, MOAB
Subject: Ugly Tomatoes
Attachments: ATTACHMENT.TXT

As a Kentucky grower of heirloom tomatoes for nearly forty years I have seen their popularity increase steadily with more chefs using them almost daily. The "ugly" tomatoes are becoming a big hit largely because of superior flavor. I sell out at two farmers' markets and have many orders that I couldn't possibly fill. I also provide ugly tomatoes to many restaurants.

At the same time I have seen Florida tomatoes become more and more tasteless. I have picked ripe tomatoes from the vine on both coasts and have found that freshly picked Florida tomatoes have the same lack of flavor as those that have been picked for weeks. The flavor has been bred out of Florida shipping tomatoes. They are round and firm, color well with ethylene gas, and have a very long shelf life, but that's about all.

A couple of years ago I bought a Florida winter tomato, waited a couple of weeks for it to soften to indicate ripeness, and then sliced it to go with a meal. Its smell was more like a stench--something like an athletic locker room in use. We couldn't eat it so, to avoid wasting it entirely, I gave it to my son's chickens. They turned up their noses at it, and it lay on the ground until finally rotting some weeks later.

If there is a tomato in Florida that has a good flavor, regardless of its shape it needs to be put on the market. We have had enough of grungy tomatoes. Any tasty tomato would improve the reputation of Florida tomatoes.

Bill Best
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